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NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2004 2008

VIA: _____
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DIS. CH. NO. ECMA-5933

CONFIDENTIAL
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DATE: JAN 31 1955

TO : Chief, EE

FROM : Chief of Mission, Frankfurt *ALM*

SUBJECT: GENERAL— Intelligence

SPECIFIC— Positive Intelligence Exploitation of Estonian Ex-General

1. This office has received the attached memo from Mr. C.D. Chamberlin of HICOG Public Affairs Division, following up a recent conversation I had with him. The memo concerns one Johann Soodla, an Estonian who was formerly Inspector General of the Estonian army, and allegedly operating the Estonian railroad prior to 1945. As can be seen from Chamberlin's memo, Chamberlin believes that Soodla might still have some information of value to U.S. authorities; and might never have been fully debriefed.
from Soodla
2. Chamberlin did pass one report on German-Estonian-Russian events in the last war to the SHAPE Planning Group on 12 March 1951. Receipt of this report was acknowledged by Lt. General Alfred M. Gruenther, with the remark that he turned that particular report over to his Intelligence Division.
3. This memo is forwarded to you for your retention and whatever action you deem appropriate.

Enclosures:

1. Chamberlin's memo dated 25 Jan 55. (2 copies)

28 January 1955

Distribution:

- 3- EE, w/encl. as stated (1 copy) (DIRECT)
- 3- COM, w/encl. as stated (1 copy)

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ATT# 5933

OFFICE OF THE U.S. HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR GERMANY

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

OFFICIAL USE ONLY

To: JCA - Mr. Thaxter Swan
From: PHH:EX - C. D. Chamberlin
Subject: Name Check of Mr. Soodla

Date: January 25, 1955

In 1948-50 I was in charge of an IRO camp for D.P. Balts, Poles, Yugoslavs, Czechs, Ukrainians, etc. in Osnabrueck.

The supervisor in charge of our vocational training school was Mr. Johann Soodla, an Estonian who was formerly Inspector General of the Estonian army. I found Mr. Soodla and his wife Irene, the Camp Vocational Advisor, very industrious and interesting people. They are both at present in charge of a vocational training school for displaced persons operated by the World Council of Churches in Trieste. Their address is: Viale D'Annunzio 37 IV - Trieste.

I am wondering if the Soodlas have ever been interrogated for information which might be useful to the United States.

Like most Baltic people, they have had a hard time. The Russians drove them out of Tallinn (1930?). When the Germans came in in 1940, Gen. Soodla worked with them (I think he operated the Estonian railways). Then in 1945 they had to flee Estonia in a hurry and came to Germany via Danzig. After the German capitulation, Gen. Soodla with a lot of other Estonians (in German uniforms) was put into an American P.O.W. camp (near Kiel, I think). He probably was interrogated then, but probably from a political angle rather than on the basis of his military knowledge. He was turned over to USIA in 1946 (?) and was found eligible for IRO protection (after a lot of dispute) in 1950.

He may have been pro-Nazi, it is entirely possible. But most of the IRO eligibility officers were Dutch, Belgian or French and they had little sympathy with anyone who had worn the German uniform under whatever circumstances.

Whatever his past politics, I think Soodla might have useful information for some of our strategic military people.

He is a thoroughly trained engineer and soldier. His education was in Russia (of which Estonia was a part until 1918). He was (between the wars) a member of Estonian Military Missions in France and England.

He knows English, German, Russian, French, Estonian and can get along in Polish and Yugoslav. That makes him potentially an asset to us is that he is familiar with many German railways and

languages, customs, etc. of Russia between Finland and the Black Sea. This experience and knowledge has been developed as a result of 45 years in Estonia, his military position, prominent family and his knowledge of the USSR.

I wrote about the Soodlas to General Gruenther and Senator Tobey in 1951 - but chiefly from the angle of helping him with his appeal for IRC protection.

Perhaps a name check could be instituted by your office - just to see whether he is knowledgeable in ways that would help us.

Incidentally, when I talked recently with Mrs. Soodlas mother in Goslar, she told me that on every holiday Mr. Soodla gets a letter from the Communists in Estonia which says: "Why do you not come back to your homeland, General? We know where you are!"

I think it would be well worth the effort to see just what our people have in his folder.

PUB:EX:CDChamberlin/rh
Tel: 3519